

# Stem Cell Reports

## Editorial

ISSCR



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### Quantum Leap Year

In 2002, the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) was established to provide forums for the exchange of information and ideas relating to stem cells, to strengthen global communication and collaboration between scientists, and to drive forward the field of stem cell research and its applications to medicine. Last year, the ISSCR entered its second decade and celebrated this milestone in conjunction with the ISSCR10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, in Yokohama, Japan. We reaffirmed our goals and made administrative changes to ensure that we have the appropriate complement of talents in place to maintain our leadership role in promoting scientific excellence in the fields of stem cell research and regenerative medicine.

As we enter our second decade, we continue to expand our platforms for communication and education and to explore new avenues for conversation. You are reading one of these today—*Stem Cell Reports*, our new open access journal, owned and operated by the ISSCR, with the Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors drawn from leading scientists in the field. We are thrilled to present this inaugural issue of *Stem Cell Reports*, and we thank the ISSCR Board of Directors, and in particular, the *Stem Cell Reports* editorial team spear-headed by Christine Mummery, Editor-in-Chief, for their dedicated efforts.

As another example, in the past several years, the ISSCR has expanded its meeting offerings to include a regional forum series to complement the annual meetings. The next regional forum will be held in Florence, Italy, September 15–18, 2013, with an emphasis on the transition of stem cell research to clinical medicine, followed by a second forum in Suzhou, China, October 14–18, 2013, which will be a diverse program including basic through translational science. Our goal is to constantly bring to the field the latest and most exciting stem cell discoveries, so that the best new science becomes the benchmark. The regional forums are one way to enhance the impact of this science.

The annual meeting remains the premier international conference at which the stem cell and translational research community highlight the newest research trends. An incredible breadth and depth of science is offered from scientists, who attend this meeting from more than 55 countries, through plenary, concurrent, and poster sessions and the discussions that surround these. More than half of all this year's speakers were selected from abstracts submitted by participants. In addition, the 2013 meeting in Boston will continue to feature one-minute “poster teaser” presentations during plenary sessions. This format has proved so popular that the Program Committee, building on this concept, added almost



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60 five-minute “poster brief” presentations to the concurrent session schedule to spark conversations that will continue each evening at the poster receptions.

Another recent initiative is *ISSCR Connect*, an online educational portal. The goal of *ISSCR Connect* is two-fold: first, to enhance the experience of those attending the ISSCR meeting, and second, to provide members with additional educational opportunities on a year-round basis and expand their access to the ISSCR's annual meeting and regional forums. For meeting attendees, it provides planning tools in advance and access to content after the event. For the annual meeting, concurrent session talks recorded at the meeting are made available for a limited period following the meeting, a valuable feature as the size and breadth of the meeting continues to grow. *ISSCR Connect* also delivers additional monthly programming on selected new research topics and, for members, access to select talks from meetings they are not able to attend in person. We encourage you to tune in at the end of this month to explore content from the ISSCR's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

As the society has grown over the last ten years, we reached a threshold in which self-management became the best option. After careful consideration by leadership, the society moved into new offices in August 2012, and the transition of all administrative functions to independent management was completed by the end of the



calendar year. Going forward, the ISSCR will expand its scientific programs, promote clinical translation, and enhance public education with our own dedicated staff. In my eighth year as director, I'm delighted to have been part of this step and to ensure that we were able to maintain a high degree of continuity in key staff positions as we made the transition to independence. Heather Rooke, Ph.D., remains Scientific Director, and James Donovan continues as Membership and Meeting Services Director. To complement their strengths, Shelly Staat, with a background in industry, has joined the senior management team as Director of Business Development and Marketing, rounding out the current dedicated full-time staff of 12 located at the headquarters office in the Chicago suburb of Skokie, Illinois.

The life blood of any organization is its membership, and part of the challenge of moving to stand-alone management has been the migration of the membership support services and database. Although this is a significant task, it also provides us the opportunity to look closely at our current and potential members, their research interests, career stages, and evolving needs. The Membership Committee, led by Martin Pera (Melbourne, Australia), and supported by a dedicated staff person, have already initiated that review. Starting with the Board of Directors and committee members, and continuing on a country-by-country basis, we are in the process of compiling a comprehensive list of principal investigators in both academic and industry settings, along with their research teams of students and investigators. We have a young and mobile membership, with upward of 40% of our membership in training positions, and we encourage you to send us updated contact information as you take that next career step so we can best serve you and ensure our records are the most accurate reflection of this dynamic field.

The ISSCR is governed by a Board of Directors, a cross-section of the field, in both geography and career stages. In addition, the ISSCR has a Global Advisory Council

(GAC) that has become an increasingly central part of the ISSCR's activities since it was formed in 2008. This last year was also a transition year for this group, as Hiro Ogawa, an international business man who has served on the GAC for several years, accepted the baton from Founding Chair Robert Klein, to lead the advisory council in a new series of initiatives and to bring the council's business acumen, field expertise, and philanthropic resources to bear on the ISSCR's core goal of delivering effective new medical treatments to patients around the globe.

The past year was big for both the field of stem cell research as well as the ISSCR as a society. In October, the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Sir John Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka, ISSCR President (2012–2013), for their discoveries that “mature cells can be reprogrammed to become pluripotent,” challenging our views of development and cellular commitment. This award highlighted the roots of stem cell research in developmental biology in juxtaposition with the vision of harnessing the power of stem cell research for the betterment of human health. I've had the great privilege of working closely with Dr. Yamanaka this year, and I'm extremely gratified to say that Shinya is exemplary of those who serve on the Board of Directors and in other leadership positions within this organization. I look forward to introducing Dr. Yamanaka, incoming ISSCR President, Dr. Rossant, and others in major leadership roles in the ISSCR to a broad cross-section of the members during the annual meeting in Boston.

A warm welcome to the ISSCR's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and to our inaugural issue of *Stem Cell Reports*!

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